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French Influence as Reflected in the English
Periodical Essayists

FRENCH INFLUENCE
AS REFLECTED IN THE ENGLISH
PERIODICAL ESSAYISTS

BY

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I

INTRODUCTION

"In all changes of English manners foreign influence has long been dominant."¹ In the seventeenth century France and England were beginning to recognize each other. The two countries separated by a narrow channel, and many differences, began to realize that each was worth noticing, at least.² Jean-Jacques Rousseau said, "The French are the most travelled people. The English nobility travel, the French nobility do not; the French people travel, the English people do not." So the French people began to wander into England; the way was short, perhaps, but dreary, uncomfortable, and almost unbearable to Frenchmen brought up in the luxury of the court. When they arrived in England, they were disappointed with the whole condition of the country; they refused to try to study the people or to try to understand the English manners and customs. When they returned to their own country--and they went back as quickly as possible--they spread reports of the atrocious English climate, and the haughty, unfriendly English people.

The French did not, as a rule, learn English, but the English became familiar with the French language and admired things French.³ French influence was powerful in England in the seventeenth century. Gallomania began in its full force with the return of the

1-British Essayists, ed. Chalmers: I, xix. 2-Anglo-French Entente in the Seventeenth Century: Charles Bastide. 3- L'Influence française en dix-septième siècle: L. Charlanne.

Royalists to England after their long sojourn in France. To be a real lady or gentleman of distinction, one had to dress French, furnish one's house French, eat French, talk French, and even think French.

In the eighteenth century England was still England, but France was Europe. Gallomania became a raging torrent which rushed and whirled along with it the English people, English customs, and English food; and turned the strong, stolid John Bull into a "pindling" Frenchman, plain English women into painted dolls, and roast beef and home-brewed ale into frog's legs, ragoûts, fricassées, and liqueurs. English manners, strong, hale, formal, and natural became artificial, unnatural, informal, and altogether affected.

"These foreign fopperies, ignorance of the rules of propriety, and indecorous affectations introduced many absurdities into public and private life for which no remedy was provided in the funds of general instruction and which consequently prevailed with impunity until the appearance of the Essayists."⁴ With their appearance the attacks became forceful and vehement on the false gods which the English people had set up for themselves to worship. France, from whom the gods were brought and sent, was brought to account by the Essayists for her influence on a nation which allowed the gods to stand, and which was "not ashamed of being conquered by the follies of a nation whose arms she despised."⁴

In the periodical essays I shall look for the ideas expressed by the British Essayists of the French national characteris-

4-British Essayists, ed. Chalmers: I, xix.

tics, their fashions and manners, their language and literature—
which exerted such an influence on the English people.

II

FRENCH NATIONAL CHARACTERISTICS

If "imitation is the sincerest form of flattery," England is the most notable flatterer in the world—for she studied all of the characteristics of the French nation carefully and diligently, and then tried to imitate them and make them her own. She tried to talk quickly, with gestures, on light and generally risqué subjects; she tried to be witty and gay and vivacious; she tried to roll her eyes and flirt her fan with all the assurance and coquetry of a French lady of the court,—and as a result she called forth the protests and ridicule of the British Essayists.

In the periodical essays we find a full characterization of the French nation as it was looked upon in the eighteenth century. "Levity, liveliness and assurance are the qualifications of the French nation, and vivacity is their distinguishing character."¹ The French nation is generally regarded as very agreeable and delightful to know; it is a nation most fruitful of geniuses and the people are very polite and courteous. In a letter written by a traveler in France to the Guardian the beauties of Versailles and Paris are spoken of with approval, but the traveler adds: "What makes all these shows the more agreeable is the great kindness that is shown to strangers. If the French do not excel the English in all the arts of humanity they do at least in the outward expressions of it."² Another characteristic which any nation should be proud to have is the happiness of the

1-Spectator, No. 435. 2-Guardian, No. 104.

French. The Guardian remarks that "the people are the happiest in the world, and enjoy from the benefit of their climate and natural constitution such perpetual gladness of heart and easiness of temper, as even liberty and plenty cannot bestow on those of other nations."³

The Guardian does well to emphasize the happiness of the French, for they are happy in spite of everything and especially in spite of their poverty. The lower classes in France were constantly, during the war especially, in want of the necessities of life.⁴ The poor were threatened by famine because the amount of bread which was sold in Paris for sixpence a pound "was not half enough to supply the necessities of the people."⁵ "The kingdom of France is in the utmost misery and distraction.... Instead of preparations for war and the defense of their country there is nothing to be seen but evident marks of a general despair, processions, fastings, public mournings and humiliations" which have become "the sole employments of a people who were lately the most vain and gay of any in the universe."⁵

The Tatler satirically comments on the poverty of food in France by a short poem addressed to Lewis le Grand. The letter is written by a gentleman who says: "Though I am in a manner unknown in his country and have not been seen there these many months, I have wrote this post to the king of France.

To Lewis Le Grand

Though in your country I'm unknown

Yet, Sir, I must advise you

Of late so poor and mean you've grown

That all the world despise you.

3-Guardian, No.104. 4-Tatler, Nos. 2, 6, 7, 10, 18, 19, 24, 28, 37, 43. 5-Tatler, No. 18.

Here vermin eat your majesty
 There meagre subjects stand unfed;
 What surer sign of poverty
 Than many lice and little bread.

Then, Sir, the present moment chuse;
 Our armies are advanced:
 Three times you at the Hague refuse
 At Paris won't be granted.

Consider this, and Dunkirk raze,
 And Anna's title own;
 Send one Pretender out to graze.
 And call the other home.

Your Humble Servant
 Staff of Life." ⁶

A particular instance of the misery of the French people is given in the Tatler: "which is, that on the day Monsieur Rouille returned to court, the common people gathered in crowds about the Dauphin's Coach, crying, 'Peace and Bread, Bread and Peace.'" ⁷ The poor people's condition is further described by the Guardian: "Black bread, onions and other roots are the usual diet of the generality of your people; their common drink the pure element; they are dressed

6-Tatler, No. 24. 7-Tatler, No. 37.

in canvas and wooden shoes, I mean such of them as are not barefoot and half naked. How miserable must be the lodging of these wretches. Even those who will not ask for charity are huddled together four or five families in a house."⁸ "Such is the lodging in your capital. That of your other towns is yet of less value, but nothing can be more ruinous than the cottages in the villages."⁸ And still the people are happy, and make the best of things; "everyone sings, laughs and starves."⁹

Around the king's court, of course, everybody was happy; and they had reason to be. The king's palaces were wonderful works of art. "I do not believe that you can make finer landscapes than those about the king's houses, or with all your descriptions raise a more magnificent palace than Versailles."⁹ "I never thought there had been in the world such an excessive magnificence; one can scarce¹⁹ conceive the pomp that appears in everything about the king." Surrounded by everything that one could possibly wish, why shouldn't the French courtiers be happy?

Besides vivacity, levity, and happiness the French possess according to the Essayists, a prominent characteristic, prominent in nearly every nation except, perhaps, in the English: that is, talkativeness, and together with that, gesticulation, which serve also to show their liveliness and happy turn of mind. "The French are¹⁰ very talkative," says the Connoisseur, and the World cries out indignantly: "A Frenchman shall talk to you whether you understand his

8-Guardian, No. 52. 9-Adventurer, No. 101. 10-Connoisseur, No. 104.

language or not; never troubling his head whether you have learned French, still he keeps up the conversation, fixes his eye full in your face, and asks a thousand questions, which he answers himself for want of a more satisfactory reply."¹¹

And the gestures! "A French man accompanies almost every word in ordinary conversation and even inquiries concerning your health with a thousand shrugs and grimaces."¹² "The Frenchman waves his hands and writhes his body in recounting the revolutions of a game of cards."¹³ "I do not see," the essayist ironically observes, "that the manual exercise is of much use or that they leave any image more deeply impressed by their bustle and vehemence of communication." "The French man runs on in a continual alarum; he always makes a noise so long as he is in company and is as loud at any hour of the day as our own countryman at midnight."¹⁴ "The conversation is all alike; a couple of French barbers accost each other with the same volubility of speech and the same grimace and action as two courtiers on the Tuilleries."¹⁴ The Essayists seem to regard the last trait as being almost unpardonable.

The assurance of the French is emphasized by their extreme egotism. "They seem especially persuaded that there are no wits or reasoners equal to their own,"¹⁵ says Dr. Johnson, who, as we know, hated the French very sincerely. The Citizen of the World remarks that, when one meets the French, "there is a staring vivacity in every eye, not excepting even the children; the people have got it into

11-World, No. 103. 12-Connoisseur, No. 126. 13-Citizen of the World, No. 90. 14-Connoisseur, No. 138. 15- Rambler, No. 93.

their heads, that they have more wit than others and so stare in order to look smart."¹⁶ "The French have a great admiration for themselves," according to this same Citizen of the World. "Everything that belongs to them and their nation is great, magnificent beyond expression, quite romantic. Every garden is a paradise, every hovel is a palace, and every woman an angel. They shut their eyes close, throw their mouths open wide, and cry out in rapture. 'Sacré! what beauty! O ciel! what taste! Mort de ma vie! what grandeur! Was ever any people like ourselves; we are the nation of men, and all the rest are no better than two-legged barbarians.'"¹⁶

The Essayists bewail the fact that French morals are depraved. Their religion is reduced to foolish show by the liberty of the people. "Religion itself loses its solemnity among them," comments the Citizen of the World; "upon their roads at about every five miles distance, you see an image of the Virgin Mary, dressed up in grim head clothes, painted cheeks, and an old red petticoat; before her a lamp is often kept burning, at which, with the saint's permission, I have often lighted my pipe. At other times with a wooden Saviour fitted out in complete garniture, with sponge, spear, nails, pincers, hammer, beeswax, and vinegar bottle."¹⁶ This criticism is a little unfair, and the writer realizes it probably, for he justifies himself by adding, "It is but just to force back part of that ridicule upon them which they attempt to lavish upon others."¹⁶

They are also accused of shifts, and subterfuges, and the Tatler chastises them roundly, saying, "A nation is more than undone when it is reduced to practise these," and he gives an instance of "their trickery in communicating news; instead of giving exact ac-
16-Citizen of the World, No. 75.

counts they tell what is true, but at the same time a falsehood, when all circumstances are related."¹⁷

Another proof of the depravity of the morals of the French is the fact that, "in France every married woman of condition intrigues openly, and it is thought the highest breach of French politeness for a husband to interfere in any of her pleasures."¹⁸

All these French characteristics, especially "levity, liveliness and assurance", were grafted on to English characteristics, until the women of England had acquired a veneer, very thin it is true, of French vivacity and lightness of both manners and mind. After the veneer of characteristics had been fully applied, and had dried on, the English were freely coated with French fashions and French language, which in their turn received the comments of the Essayists.

17-Tatler, No. 64. 18-World, No. 192.

III

THE INFLUENCE OF FRENCH FASHIONS

In trying to discover the true cause of all events, all situations, especially those doubtful or strange, we are told: "Cherchez la femme"; in trying to discover the root of the spread of French fashions in England in the eighteenth century, — "Cherchez la femme." Not content with having fashions brought over from Paris and being spread around second-hand, mothers anxious for their daughters to have the best and the latest persuaded the fathers, who preferred beefsteak to frog's legs, and the natural bloom of health on the cheeks of their daughters to the rouge of the frivolous artificial Parisiennes, that only Paris life would make their daughters more cultured and more fit for society. They argued the question and brought about consent with such persuasive arguments as these: "We shall see the newest fashions there. You see how my cousin Kitty was improved after going to Paris last year. We shall meet the best people in Paris." ¹ The poor papas, seeing very clearly that their daughters must, by all means, be improved, and could certainly be improved in no other way, bravely underwent the anguish and discomfort of a trip to France, and gobbled down uncomplainingly the horrible French cuisine. "So a migrating distemper seized the English women and annually carried such numbers of our private families to Paris to expose themselves there as

1- World, No. 18.

English and here after their return as French, that the French called, I am assured, those swarms of English which overrun France a second invasion of the Goths and Vandals." ²

In Paris the ladies established themselves and began with care and preciseness to Frenchify themselves. Paint, powder, French dresses, French mannerisms, French dances, French customs, French food, French furniture, were eagerly applied to stolid English matrons and buxom English lassies. On their return to England, "not only their airs and dress, but even their faces are French." ³ We can describe them with the World as "travelling females made frightful with all the frippery of France, patched, painted and pomponed." ⁴ When they arrive at home and are again surrounded by English people and commonplaces they discover that, after their sojourn in Paris, they are so accustomed to a French atmosphere, they cannot live without it.

Accordingly they continued to copy the French custom of "besmearing their faces with unguent, cerise, and plaster"; ⁵ they have a "jointed baby dressed in the latest fashion sent over once a month" ⁶ even "during the war the ladies spent large sums of money trying to secure the puppet." ⁶ When they were accused of extravagance and foolishness the ladies replied, "'You can't imagine how infinitely the French dress exceeds our own,'" ⁶ and excused themselves still further by saying, "'We owe most of our janty fashions now in vogue to some adept beau among them.'" ⁷ "Their ladies exert the whole scope of their fancies upon every new petticoat, every new head dress undergoes a change and not a lady of genius will appear in the same shape

2- World, No. 18. 3-World, No. 75. 4-World, No. 22. 5- Connoisseur, No. 5. 6-Spectator, No.277. 7- Guardian, No. 149.

two days together."⁸ In other words, Fashion, no matter what one must pay to keep her, must be cultivated and imitated even if she is such a changeable, fickle creature; the more precocious she is, the closer must she be followed. Besides paint and dress the English ladies demanded that their children have tutors, and "no tutor is properly qualified if he cannot speak French,"⁹ for the ladies firmly believed that "no language except French is of any service to a gentleman or a lady."¹⁰ A fencing master was secured whose name was "M. L'Alonge";¹¹ a "French dancing master"¹⁰ was an indispensable necessity; "the mantua maker must be an expert anatomist, and must, if judiciously chosen, have a name of French termination."¹² "French haircutters"¹² are employed; there was a "profusion of French ornament in house decoration";¹³ and the house servants, "from the maitre d'hotel to the boy who looks after the poultry"¹⁴, must furnish a French atmosphere, and the French chef¹⁵ must be able to provide "daily inroads of fricassées and soups maigres". The women acquired the French customs, too; they had, for a time, a French valet de chambre; they acquired the French habit of "receiving visits in bed, of talking loudly in public places, and of never pronouncing a hard word correctly."¹⁶ "The English ladies so skilfully grafted the French genius for intrigue upon British liberty and beauty that their conduct appears perfectly natural, tho we must do the French justice to allow that when a lady of this airy disposition visits Paris, she returns most wonderfully improved."¹⁷

8- Guardian, No. 149. 9-Rambler, No. 132. 10-Connoisseur, No. 22.
 11-Adventurer, No. 34. 12- Connoisseur, No. 94. 13- World, No. 38.
 14- Connoisseur, No. 137. 15- Rambler, No. 19. 16- Spectator, No. 45.
 17- Connoisseur, No. 4.

Naturally the men had something to say about the changes being made around them. They began to notice slowly, as men do, the queer costumes, the paint, the affected manners in attitude and conversation of the ladies of their choice; even their children greeted their questions with "Oui, papa," and "Non, papa," and the servants answered with a "Merci, monsieur," "Voilà, monsieur," or "Très bien, monsieur," until the poor gentlemen were driven nearly wild. But most of all they noticed and hated the fact that their food and drink were disguised under strange forms and strange names; and at this last and most important horror, they raised protests. But to no avail. "Mais, oui, papa, c'est ça. C'est vrai, mais nous devons être françaises." And before a storm of explanations and excuses delivered in rapid French what could poor papa do? Who could help the poor defenseless men, who would help them to show the women wherein their folly lay? Who could reason with them in their own way? The Essayists with their little papers were their only means of defense; and the Essayists rose bravely to the occasion.

The Essayists appealed to the ladies' patriotism; they hoped that "while we are at war with France the ladies will conceive such a dislike for the fashions of their enemies, that they will let their hair grow again." ¹⁸ They appealed to their vanity, saying that "fresh air is better than all the rouge of the French art;" ¹⁹ and complimenting them remarked, "Let the French ladies white wash and plaster their faces and lay it on with a trowel, they can't compare with

18- World, No. 183. 19- World, No. 36.

the genuine glow of a British cheek." ²⁰ "Paint can add little to the natural red and white of the complexions of our ladies tho' perhaps it may heighten the sallow visages of the French." ²¹ They tried to reach the hearts of the ladies by appealing to their love for the men; and one essayist declares earnestly, "I assure them, that of all French ragouts, there is none to which an Englishman has so little appetite as an Englishwoman served up to him a la française." ²² They used flattery, compliments; pointed out their follies sarcastically, whimsically, earnestly, cajolingly; appealed to their good sense, their sense of humor, their sense of the ridiculous, their sense of pity, their sense of duty toward their country, their husbands, their children, and future generations— but everything failed. The flattery complimented them; their follies appealed to their sense of humor; they thought they were using their good sense and doing their duty to everybody and everything by improving their own dress, manners, morals, and customs through the cultivation of French models. They persisted in spite of protests, in spite of all that any one could say or do, in wearing "French rouge," ²³ "Paris Pumps and Lyons Velvet," ²⁴ "French brocade" ²⁵ and "French dresses;" ²⁶ in eating French ragouts" ²⁷ and drinking French liqueurs— ²⁸ until the Essayists were compelled to give up in despair and to add as a final protest, that, "what by travelling abroad and by French milliners, mantua-makers and hair cutters at home, our politest assemblies seem to be filled with foreigners." ²⁹

20-Connoisseur, No. 46. 2-Connoisseur, No. 36. 22- World, No. 18.

23-World, No. 127; Connoisseur, No.36. 24-World, No. 205. 25-Adventurer, No. 23. 26- Adventurer, No. 23; Connoisseur, No. 94. 27-World, No. 18. 28- Connoisseur, No. 137. 29-World, No. 75.

IV

THE SPREAD OF THE FRENCH LANGUAGE IN ENGLAND

Not only was England imitating the French characteristics of "liveliness, vivacity, and assurance", but she was mingling French jargon with her own language, until the Essayists were forced to give utterance to their protests against the evil of corrupting the English language. Of course, the use of French phrases was current in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, especially at the courts where the French nobles visited, but it was not until the early part of the eighteenth century that the habit was noticeable. During the war in the early part of the century when English soldiers wrote home and used various French terms to describe the events of the war, the Spectator expressed the desire "that certain men be set apart as superintendents of our language to hinder any words of foreign coin, from passing among us and in particular to prohibit any French phrases from being current, when those of our own stamp are altogether valuable. When we have won battles that may be described in our own language, why are our papers filled with so many unintelligible exploits and the French obliged to lend us a part of their tongue before we can know how they are conquered?"¹ There seemed to be a jealous fear, lest, besides the language, "the French modes of religion and government might insinuate themselves in their turn."² In spite of the desires of the Essayists to impress upon the people the fact that "the English language is copiously instructive", and that "recourse to foreign language and writers is needless",³ the French language kept gaining a

1- Spectator, No. 165. 2- World, No. 12 3- Idler, No. 91.

foothold in England. Toward the middle of the century the seeds of the French language had been so widely disseminated as to cause one essayist to remark, "A fashionable coxcomb never complains of the vapours, but tells you he is very much ennuyé, not genteel, but dégagé; nor is he taken with an elegant simplicity or a beautiful countenance, but breaks out into raptures or a je ne sais quoi and a certain naïveté. In a word his head as well as his heels is entirely French, and he is thoroughly petit maître in his language as well as in his behavior."⁴

In spite of the fact that French so aroused the ire of the essayists, or because they did not wish to be outdone in French phrasing by the fashionable coxcombs, or perhaps because they thought that the use of the French language by them would so enrage the English that they would hastily drop all traces of the French tongue from their conversation-- for any one or for all of these reasons the Essayists concluded that they would try their hands and tongues on the quirks of that despised nation. Accordingly they sprinkled their writings with many a French phrase. They showed their familiarity with all kinds of French terms; and they frequently built up entire essays around the meaning of a certain word or group of words. "Les mœurs"⁵ is very carefully defined, and "double entendre"⁶ is explained as being "a figure in rhetoric which owes its birth as well as its name to our inventive neighbors the French, and is that happy art, by which persons of fashion may communicate the loosest ideas under the most innocent expressions." Here even while the essayist was ful-

4-Connoisseur, No. 42. 5-World, No. 189. 6- World, No. 201.

filling his duty and really owed something to the French for supplying him a means for doing so, he could not resist a poison-laden thrust at his "inventive neighbor". There are some French words which are used with great freedom as though they were very well known, and in common use among the people: "bon ton"⁷ is a much admired term; "savoir faire"⁸ is used with great appreciation and rightly too, for it helps many an essayist over a difficult passage when he is at loss for a better English word. The Connoisseur, speaking of the French theatre, uses "parterre"⁹ very freely, and also "jeu de théâtre",¹⁰ which he very kindly translates as "juggle of the theatre." In another paper a short study of the word "cabriole"¹¹ is given, which, the Connoisseur says, "we may trace from the same original with our English word 'caprice', both being derived from the French 'cabrer' which signifies to prance like a horse." One may imply from this that perhaps the Essayists, or at least some of them, were not so opposed to the French tongue, since they were willing to acknowledge the derivation of one of their own words from the French. The Connoisseur speaks also of the "politeness of the French language",¹² which has "distinguished every glutton by the title of bon vivant." After reading through the works of the eighteenth century essayists and after noting the excessive use of French words and phrases one is certain that the essayists appreciate the adaptability and usefulness of the French language even while they censure its use among the people in their daily conversations.

7-World, No. 102. 8- Rambler, No. 98. 9- Connoisseur, No. 14.

10-Connoisseur, No. 34. 11-Connoisseur, No. 112. 12-Connoisseur, No. 87.

Through the Essayists thus far, we have learned that France had influenced England to adopt her national characteristics, to talk and write in her language, to wear clothes modeled after her patterns, to eat food prepared by her chefs, to drink wines and liqueurs of her vintage, to be waited upon by people of her nation, to be educated by her tutors, dancing-masters, fencing-masters, and musicians, to travel in her country, to decorate the English houses with her ornaments, and lastly, and this is not of the least importance, to read and appreciate and know French authors, to learn that France was not all frivolity and lightness, that her people were not all all froth and fluff, but that she was one of the foremost literary lights of the world, whom it was worth a great deal to know and love.

V

THE KNOWLEDGE OF FRENCH LITERATURE IN ENGLAND

The Essayists, who have shown great knowledge of other "things French", exhibit in their writings a marked familiarity with French writers and French literary productions. The list of authors which I have reaped from the periodical essayists includes writers of the sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth centuries, and they are gathered from every part of the literary field—critics, satirists, philosophers, dramatists, and poets, a grammarian and a character-writer are all discussed and criticized. Such men as Montaigne, Rabelais, Molière, Racine and Corneille, Boileau, Bayle, Fontenelle, Fénelon, Montesquieu, Voltaire, Diderot, and D'Alembert are frequently referred to, sometimes quoted, commented upon, approved, or censured; some minor writers are known well enough to call forth comments, such as Bouhours, Segrais, Rapin, Bourdaloue, Bossu, and Brunoy.

From the number of French things imported by the English people which the essayists have disapproved of, and of which they have done their best to purge the English nation, we might expect them to censure also the spread of the French authors, and their popularity among the British. On the contrary, French authors are willingly popularized by the Essayists, and they receive very little censure.

It is true that the Tatler, in the early part of the century, when the French were not looked upon at all favorably, criticized the French authors severely. Addison enunciated: "I could

never read any of our modish French writers or those of our own country who are imitators of that trifling nation without being for some time out of humour with myself and everything about me. Their business is to depreciate human nature and consider it under its worst appearances. They give mean interpretations and base motives to the worthiest actions; they resolve virtue and vice into constitution. In short, they endeavour to make no distinction between man and man, or between the species of man and that of beasts."¹ In the Idler, Johnson, who has no sympathy whatever with anything French says that, "all recourse to foreign writers is needless. Let us not, therefore, make our neighbors proud by soliciting help which we do not want, nor discourage our own industry by difficulties which we need not suffer."² Aside from these two unfavorable comments, the judgment of the Essayists is kind and just for the most part; Montaigne is the only author who is not appreciated fully, and who is unduly censured. Of all the authors whom I have mentioned, Boileau, La Bruyère, Voltaire, Montaigne, Fontenelle, Corneille and Racine are the most frequently spoken of, and I conclude that they were the best known and the most widely read.

Judging from the number of times that the name of Boileau appears in the periodical essays, we may safely state that he was the best known of all the French writers in England in the eighteenth century. As a satirist he is very greatly admired.³ His eighth satire is spoken of in several places and he is grouped with

1-Tatler, No. 108. 2-Idler, No. 91. 3-Tatler, No. 26; Spectator, Nos. 62, 70; Adventurer, Nos. 59, 63, 37; World, No. 98. 4-Adventurer, No. 105.

Horace and Juvenal as a satirist by one essayist,⁵ and is even preferred to them by another.⁶ The chief virtue which he possesses, according to the essayists of the Spectator, Rambler, and World is his "justness"⁷ and "exquisite judgment".⁸ He is often quoted,⁹ and frequently the quotations are commented on. He is given the credit "for banishing from the French every species of bad eloquence and false wit",¹⁰ which is a good account of credit for the English to bestow upon a French author, however much they appreciate him. His worst mistake, as the Essayists saw it, was made when Boileau said that love scenes always insure success in drama;¹¹ and the worst¹² censure which he receives is being called "severe" by the World. After all is said and done, the Essayists have certainly shown their appreciation for one French product; and they are as warm in their approval of the author, as they were in their disapproval of the adoption of French morals and manners.

After Boileau, the author who received the greatest approbation from the Essayists was La Bruyère. Probably the best way

5- Spectator, No. 137. 6-Adventurer, No. 133. 7-World, No. 98; Rambler, No. 168. 8-Spectator, No. 209. 9-Spectator, No. 117; Rambler, No. 168; Adventurer, No. 63; World, No. 48. 10-World, No. 26. 11-Adventurer, No. 113. 12-World, No. 98.

to show what ideas the essayists had of La Bruyère as a character-writer is to quote a few passages of criticism from the Essays. The general attitude of the English essayists is one of admiration.¹³ "Theophrastus must yield to La Bruyère for his intimate knowledge of human nature,"¹⁴ says one essayist. Speaking of his characters more specifically, the Spectator says, "M. Bruyère has given us the character of an absent man, with a great deal of humour which he has pushed to an agreeable extravagance."¹⁵ The Spectator also quotes La Bruyère's own characterization of the French people.¹⁶ "The characters of La Bruyère are drawn with spirit and propriety, without a total departure from nature and resemblance as sometimes is the case in pretended pictures of life,"¹⁷ warmly declares the Adventurer. This seems to be the general opinion of the periodical essayists concerning La Bruyère.

As an introduction to an essay on the French moralists and French critics the Adventurer says, "To the present prevailing passion for French moralists and French critics may be imputed the superficial show of learning and abilities of which I am complaining. And since these alluring authors are become not only so fashionable an amusement of those who call themselves the polite world, but also engross the attention of academical students, I am tempted to inquire into the merits of the most celebrated among them of both kinds."¹⁷

13-Spectator, No. 51; Rambler, No. 143; Adventurer, Nos. 59, 63.

14-Adventurer, No. 133. 15-Spectator, No. 77. 16-Spectator, No. 51.

17-Adventurer, No. 49.

In the list of moralists and critics we find Montaigne, who is charged with "vanity, indecency, and skepticism." "He is a man who undertakes to transmit his thoughts on life and manners to posterity, with the hopes of entertaining and amending future ages," and the man who does this "must be either exceedingly vain or exceedingly careless, if he expects either of these effects can be produced by wanton sallies of the imagination, by useless and impertinent digressions, by never forming or following any regular plan, never classing or confining his thoughts, never changing or rejecting any sentiment that occurs to him."¹⁸ Montaigne is not always spoken of in this strain: he is quoted and often agreed with.¹⁹ In one place indeed we read that Pope is indebted to Montaigne for some of his ideas.²⁰

La Rochefoucault, "another fashionable philosopher,"¹⁸ writes his maxims with "expressive elegance and with nervous brevity,"¹⁸ says the Adventurer, and "to give smartness and shortness to his sentences Rochefoucault frequently makes use of the antithesis, a mode of speaking the most tiresome and disgusting of any, by the sameness and similarity of the periods."²¹ Observations of Rochefoucault are quoted, and one of them is followed by the comment, "The justness of this remark is equal to its shrewdness-- which shows that Rochefoucault's faults were not very numerous."²²

Saint-Evremond, spoken of only once in the periodical essayists, is termed a "florid verbose trifler without novelty or solidity in his reflections."¹⁸ Bayle, Fontenelle, and Descartes as phil-

18-Adventurer, No. 49. 19-World, No. 16 and No. 128. 20-World, No. 63. 21- World, No. 72. 22-Connoisseur, No. 124.

osophers receive the kindly judgment of the Essa²³ists. Bayle is described as a man of great freedom of thought, as well as of excellent feeling and judgment. His Dictionary is spoken of in connection with the great learning of Captain Garish in the Adventurer.²³ Fontenelle is genially termed "an ingenious philosopher;" his Dialogues des Morts²⁵ and his Panegyric on Isaac Newton²⁶ are spoken of in the periodical essays. Descartes is called the greatest philosopher of France.²⁷

Among the French critics we find in the periodical essays besides Boileau: Rapin, Bossu, Brunoy, and Fenelon. The Adventurer comments on Rapin, saying: "The censures and the commendations this writer bestows are general and indiscriminate without specifying the reasons of his approbation or dislike,²⁸ and without alleging the passages which may support his opinion." On the other hand Bossu is spoken of thus: "This learned writer merits the attention and diligent perusal of the true scholar. What I principally admire in Bossu is the regularity of his plan and the exactness of his method,²⁸ which add utility as well as beauty to his work."

"Of all the French critics, Brunoy and the judicious Fênelon have had the justice to confess or perhaps the penetration to perceive in what instances, Corneille and Racine have falsified and modernized their characters and overloaded with unnecessary intrigues the simple plots of the ancients." Brunoy, says the Adventurer, has displayed the excellences of the Greek tragedy in a judic-

23-Spectator, No. 451. 24-Adventurer, No. 129. 24-Citizen of the World, No. 141. 25-Spectator, No. 576. 26-Adventurer, No. 131. 27-Rambler, No. 43. 28-Adventurer, No. 49.

ious and comprehensive manner. His translations are faithful and elegant, and the analysis of these plays is perspicuous and full." The Adventurer in another essay²⁹ is speaking of the superficial French critics and their attempt to ridicule some Greek poetry; but, he says, "let them attend to the following observation of the greatest genius of their nation." Whereupon he quotes from Fenelon.

Montesquieu is a notable addition to the list of French writers; he is mentioned several times in the periodical essays,³⁰ and he is called the "incomparable author of the Esprit des Lois."³¹

Not least among the writers of French literature are the dramatists: Racine, Corneille, Molière, and Voltaire, who are known by the periodical writers. Racine and Corneille are admired for their work in the development of classic drama and classic themes. Racine is spoken of in connection with Athaliah and Phae-³²
dram.³³ The Jocasta of Corneille is remarked upon.³⁴ Molière, "the matchless Molière,"³⁵ is called "the most consummate master of comedy that former or later ages have produced."³⁶ The Mérope of Voltaire is the only one of his dramas which is mentioned, but he, a versatile writer, is admired for other reasons.

The Citizen of the World devotes a whole essay in eulogy of Voltaire. He gives the facts of his life, and an appreciation of him which is remarkable. He says, "We have just received accounts here that Voltaire, the poet and philosopher of Europe, is

29-Adventurer, No. 45. 30-Adventurer, No. 109. 31-World, No. 148.
32-Guardian, No. 117; Adventurer, Nos. 61, 83. 33-Adventurer, Nos. 127, 133. 34-Adventurer, Nos. 59, 127, 133. 35-Connoisseur, No. 133; Spectator, No. 70; Adventurer, No. 17. 36-Adventurer, No. 83.

dead. He is now beyond the reach of the thousand enemies, who while living degraded his writings, and branded his character. Scarce a page of his latter productions that does not betray the agonies of a heart bleeding under the scourge of unmerited reproach. But seek for his character among writers like myself and you perceive him in their accounts possessed of good nature, humanity, greatness of ³⁷ soul, fortitude and almost every virtue." He seems to understand the great man himself, to understand his principles and to realize his faults better than most contemporary writers usually understand their contemporaries. In other essays Voltaire's works are mentioned: his ³⁸ Lettres Anglaises, the ³⁹ Siècle de Louis XIV, his essay on ⁴⁰ Lyric Poetry, — these are all commented on by the essayists.

So the English essayists show in their essays a very full knowledge of almost every kind of French literature. They judge the French authors and appreciate them or depreciate them just as heartily as they approve and censure the customs and characteristics of the French as these are employed by the English.

37-Citizen of the World, No. 42. 38-Connoisseur, No. 145.

39-Connoisseur, No. 15; Adventurer, Nos. 133, 127. 40-Connoisseur, No. 126.

VI

CONCLUSION

I have sought and I have found by saying, "Open, Sesame," to the periodical essays, a treasury of French influences on the English people in the eighteenth century. The French national characteristics invaded England and filled the English people with a wild desire to visit France, to learn the French language, to bring home with them French dresses, French rouge, and French servants, and to live and breathe the thrilling, exciting air of Paris, which penetrated by the importation of a French atmosphere even dense, foggy London. And the air of Paris went to the heads of the usually cool, collected Englishmen until the rush for supremacy in knowing all about France was comparable to the gold-rush in California in '49.

The people continued to admire French things in spite of their well-meant but fruitless efforts to oppose the avalanche of French influence. They used all sorts of arguments--cajolery, persuasion, mockery--but to no avail: "De gustibus non est disputandum."

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